

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARIZONA ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS TASK FORCE

March 14, 2007
1:30 p.m., MST

The Arizona English Language Learners (ELL) Task Force met in Room 2 of the Arizona Senate Building, 1700 W. Washington Street, Phoenix, Arizona. Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1:34 p.m. MST.

1. Call to Order

Present:

Mr. Alan Maguire, Chairman
Mr. Jim DiCello
Dr. Eugene Garcia
Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan
Ms. Johanna Haver
Ms. Eileen Klein
Ms. Karen Merritt
Ms. Anna Rosas

Absent:

Dr. John Baracy

A quorum was present for the purpose of conducting business.

2. Presentation and Discussion of the Development of English Language Learner Models' Components

Mr. Alan Maguire reviewed the Task Force's prior activities, including researching ELL program practices currently being used in Arizona, listening to expert testimony on SEI instruction, and recently, hearing Mr. Kevin Clark's presentation on how to develop ELL models and the principles underlying the Arizona ELL laws. These activities have been undertaken to assist the Task Force in preparing to develop the ELL model(s).

Mr. Clark stated that during his presentation he would review his March 8, 2007 presentation, present, for the Task Force's review, a diagram illustrating that presentation, and also present a matrix, "Overview of Legally Required Instructional Programs for English Learners". At that point, the Task Force could begin looking at the Structure of the models. He also stated he would help the Task Force answer two questions: What is English Language Development? What does it mean to teach English?

Mr. Clark referred to the two diagrams of the model, the circular and the linear. He reviewed the linkage and alignment among the Arizona English Language Learners Assessment (AZELLA), the Arizona Academic Standards for English, and the ELL Proficiency Standards, and he showed how these could lead to a discrete English skills sequence that teachers could use to teach English to ELLs. This would create a compendium of language objectives that teachers could follow to teach students the key skills to move them toward English proficiency using a logical order of skills. See Attachment A.

Dr. Eugene Garcia asked how the discrete skills sequence differed from the ELL proficiency standards. Mr. Clark answered that skills could be divided into specific tasks and lessons. As an example, "responds to commands" could involve the teaching of imperatives, directional vocabulary, and so on. Dr. Garcia asked if this would in effect be a curriculum. Mr. Clark replied that it was more of a tool, not a requirement.

Mr. Maguire commented that in developing public policy, it was good to have a central unifying concept, a solid base from which to build, and the standards and assessment provided this solid foundation. Then, the model can match up with the policy and principles derived from statute. Dr. Garcia expressed concern about dictating a curriculum or limiting schools on materials they can use. He also wanted to add a fifth component, "Research," to the circular diagram, to show the existent proofs of working models already in use. Ms. Margaret Garcia Dugan commented that having a discrete skill set sequence would be particularly helpful when working with a pre-emergent student who has no English skills, and would also be helpful for students who had some skills and did not have others; it would provide a clear map teachers could use. Ms. Anna Rosas agreed that it would be useful.

Dr. Garcia asked Mr. Clark if the "linear" model was truly linear because it seemed more like a relational diagram, with the AZELLA and standards in the middle. Mr. Clark agreed that the linear aspect had been forced but was not necessary; it was only a conceptual tool to help the Task Force.

Mr. Clark pointed out that he had incorporated edits to page seven suggested by Dr. John Baracy and Ms. Karen Merritt during the prior meeting. "Cost Effectiveness" is now reflected as a standard by which the model must be measured. Dr. Garcia stated that some of the principles were conclusions and needed to be changed. Mr. Clark explained that the principles were the system of beliefs by which the authors of the statute crafted the policy. Dr. Garcia raised a question about the grouping of ELLs by proficiency and wished the word "optimizes" to be changed to "facilitates" as he considered it more of a methodology than principle. Dr. Garcia raised a question on the wording of the statute. Dr. Suzy Seibert, a consultant with Aha! Inc., read the paragraph from A.R.S. 15-751 to 755 pertaining to grouping. Mr. Maguire and Dr. Garcia discussed the language and organization of the paragraph and Dr. Garcia stated that the ELL Task Force is charged with the task of creating models, not interpreting the law. Mr. Maguire stated that some interpretation was necessary for compliance. Ms. Johanna Haver agreed that the word "facilitates" better characterized the principle.

Mr. Clark reviewed the four requirements in the ELL statutes. He reminded the group of the testimony given by Dr. Faltis who had agreed that the risk of grouping students heterogeneously far exceed the risk of a homogenous grouping. Ms. Garcia Dugan stated that Proposition 203 was the reason for H.B. 2064 (Chapter 4, laws 2006), and that Proposition 203 had wanted the separation of ELL students from English proficient students while they were learning English. Dr. Garcia suggested merging the two principles under "Teaching" into one to reflect a methodology. Mr. Maguire felt it was useful to keep them separated as they dealt with different levels of school organization; the administrative level dictates who is in a class, and the teacher decides what to do in the classroom. Dr. Garcia stated that the law only allowed certain methods and organizations, but that this didn't necessary need to be stated under the principles, but under structure. He stated that if the word "facilitates" was used instead of "optimizes" or "maximizes" that he would accept the principles as written. Ms. Garcia Dugan commented that homogenous grouping by proficiency was easier to teach, requiring only one lesson plan instead of a separate one for each proficiency level.

Ms. Merritt suggested that there also be a statement that the grouping is only temporary. Mr. Maguire agreed that everyone wants ELL students to be with native English speakers as soon as it's beneficial. Dr. Garcia suggested adding the language "academically successful" to the first principle under "Role of School vis-à-vis ELL Students." Mr. Maguire commented that the best way to write the model was to aim for the middle of the student population, or the bulk of the bell curve, and later exceptions to this could be addressed. Dr. Garcia suggested making this another principle. Ms. Merritt agreed that the law mentioned models, plural, taking into account small versus large ELL populations. She stated that the statute permits schools to present their own models to the Task Force; therefore, flexibility is already in the statute.

Mr. Clark discussed page five of the handout, a diagram that depicts the SEI classroom and mainstream English language classrooms. These two types of classrooms are established in the law. Students are placed in classrooms of one type or the other based on their English proficiency. ELL students are placed in SEI classrooms until they are proficient based on the AZELLA. State law requires teaching a minimum of four hours of English Language Development to first year ELLs. The 4+hours of ELD is conducted in an SEI classroom. Ms. Merritt said it would be helpful to have a flow chart showing what happens after the second year, which type of classroom is possible at that time. The question was raised whether teachers could choose to put ELLs into a mainstream classroom after two years. Mr. Maguire stated that the law states ELLs are not to be in mainstream classrooms, so implicitly they would be placed in the SEI classrooms.

Dr. Garcia clarified that the four hour time period would only apply to the first year; beyond that, the decision would be up to the school. Mr. Maguire stated that if the student had a higher "hill" to climb in order to gain proficiency, they should have more hours of instruction in ELD. Ms. Eileen Klein agreed that a flow chart would be helpful to show where the Task Force is focusing. Dr. Garcia asked for clarification that the grouping was only for ELD and not other content area classes and requested this be reflected clearly on the diagram. He asked for clarification on

whether the four hours must be within the normal school hours or if supplemental education would be included. The law states the models are to deal with time within normal school hours only. Ms. Haver asked if schools would be able to administer AZELLA earlier than the end of the school year if they believed a student was ready to pass. Ms. Garcia Dugan stated this would be a Department of Education decision. It was agreed that if the results were only submitted at the end of the year for the SAIS database there should not be a problem with offering the assessment at times other than the beginning or end of the school year. Ms. Garcia Dugan suggested creating a basic structure beyond the first year model that could be used as an aid by schools.

Mr. Clark next explained the matrix of the description of the two types of English language classrooms. Ms. Rosas suggested adding the SEI endorsement under mainstream classroom as the state requires SEI endorsements for all educators.

Mr. Clark next discussed the definition of English Language Development (ELD) and what it means to teach English. He read a number of terms from previous testimony that illustrated the variance within the educational field's perception of what ELD means, and then he reviewed a diagram of what he thought defined ELD and the teaching of English. The five components are phonology, morphology, syntax, lexicon, and semantics. Very little about phonology, morphology, or syntax is currently taught in schools, which tend to focus more on vocabulary, under lexicon and semantics. He suggested the Task Force think about how much time each component should be taught.

Dr. Garcia stated that it was important to clarify that the instruction would be in the context of the academic environment, related to school and to the standards. Ms. Merritt referred to the ELD diagram presented by Mr. Clark and said that the word "content" separated by a line from ELD was confusing and that perhaps it should instead say "Other academic content" with ELD encompassing English academic content such as the linguistic skills and vocabulary for subjects like math and science, though not the actual math or science skills. It was generally agreed by the Task Force that all language must have a contextual basis and an academic lexicon.

3. Presentation and Discussion of the ELL Program Survey – February 2007

This agenda item was pushed to the next meeting.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Upcoming Task Force Activities

Mr. Alan Maguire requested April availability dates. The presentation by Mr. Kevin Clark will continue during the March 29 Task Force meeting as more time was needed to discuss the documents presented.

5. Call to the Public

Mr. Alan Maguire made the call to the public at 4:17pm. Mr. Salvatore Gabaldon provided copies of additional principles he had drafted as well as critiques on the principles already presented to the Task Force. He stated that the principles that schools must provide all non-native speakers with English education was incorrect; many non-native English speakers are proficient, so the principle should focus on ELLs who are tested as not proficient. Mr. Gabaldon also stated that the statement that there are only English language classes and SEI classes was incorrect, as there are 3000 bilingual classrooms with ELL students. According to the law, they are not defined as English language classrooms. Mr. Gabaldon offered several additional principles: a principle of English Acquisition, a principle on Comprehensible Instruction which mentions using a minimal amount of a child's native language to facilitate learning, a principle of Valuing Student Languages, Student-selected Materials, and Family-school Interactions. The law does not state that a student may not use materials in a language other than English, but only that teachers must use materials in English. He encouraged the Task Force to consider these principles.

6. Discussion of future meetings

The next Task Force meeting will take place on March 29 at 1:30 p.m.

7. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:22 p.m.

Arizona ELL Task Force

Alan Maguire, Chairman

April 26, 2007